



Australian Bureau of Statistics

6293.0 - Information Paper 1/95: Survey of Employment and Unemployment Patterns - Background and Overview, Apr 1995

Latest ISSUE Released at 11:30 AM (CANBERRA TIME) 01/04/1995

Summary

Main Features

INTRODUCTION

This paper provides a description of the longitudinal Survey of Employment and Unemployment Patterns (SEUP) being conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

BACKGROUND

On 4 May 1994, the Government handed down a White Paper on Employment and Growth, titled '**Working Nation**'. The overriding objective of Working Nation is to provide a comprehensive program to boost jobs growth, increase skill formation in the workforce and ensure the long-term unemployed are not left behind during the economic recovery.

The central feature of the **Working Nation** initiatives is the 'Job Compact'. The Job Compact is targeted at the long-term unemployed and provides individual case management and access to a range of labour market programs leading to a firm offer of a job placement for 6 to 12 months.

A series of measures are being put in place to effectively monitor and evaluate the **Working Nation** labour market programs and services, with a particular feature of the monitoring and evaluation strategy being a longitudinal survey of jobless people to be conducted by the ABS. This survey has become known as the Survey of Employment and Unemployment Patterns (SEUP). Further detail of the broader monitoring and evaluation strategy for the **Working Nation** initiatives is available from the Evaluation and Monitoring Branch of the Department of Employment, Education and Training.

SURVEY OBJECTIVES

The main survey objectives are:

- to assist in the assessment of the impact of the **Working Nation** initiatives, particularly the Job Compact, in alleviating the extent of 'joblessness' in the Australian economy; and
- to provide information on the dynamics of the job search and placement process and the labour force experience of jobseekers over successive twelve month periods.

In order to achieve these two broad objectives, the survey will aim to measure changes in the labour market at a broad level while the Job Compact is operating, to provide information over a number of years of the determinants of change in the labour force status of 'jobseekers', and to assist a comparison between Job Compact participants and other long-term unemployed people in terms of their success in finding and retaining jobs.

The main issues to be addressed by SEUP are outlined below, in the form of a series of questions. However, it should be noted that while this survey will contribute valuable information to enable these questions to be tested, not all the issues they raise will be able to be addressed by the results of this survey alone, and the SEUP should be seen as part of a much broader approach to evaluation of the **Working Nation** initiatives, which includes other surveys, and studies based on administrative records.

- What is the labour market outcome of Job Compact (JC) participants compared to other jobseekers? Is the JC more successful in placing people in secure long-term employment than other assistance programs?
- What is the outcome of JC participants compared to their previous job history? Does the JC enhance upward mobility? That is, are the programs resulting in people being placed in similar jobs as they had previously or in jobs requiring enhanced skills (and reflected in better earnings)?
- Are people retained by their JC employer and for how long?
- Is the JC mainly successful in helping those people who were in secure employment prior to their LTU? Or is the JC also successful in helping people move from the margins of the labour market to secure employment?
- What are the levels of unemployment/joblessness for different duration groups (based on duration of joblessness at time of selection) over the next four years?
- To what extent do the long-term jobless enter into secure employment after receiving assistance?
- To what extent does the job search activity pursued by the long-term jobless change over the period of operation of the *Working Nation* initiatives?
- What change is there in participation in training and retraining by the long-term jobless over the period of operation of the *Working Nation* initiatives?
- Does more intensive case management contribute to the long-term jobless achieving sustained employment?
- What is the relative effectiveness of wage subsidy programs compared to training programs?
- What are the transition probabilities of moving from unemployment to employment for various groups? How do these transition probabilities change during the period of operation of the **Working Nation** initiatives?
- What is the incidence of intermittent unemployment?
- What factors (personal characteristics, previous labour market history, geographic location) are important to a person's chances of obtaining employment?
- How does the labour force experience of the jobless compare to that of other groups in

the population?

THE SURVEY SAMPLE

The survey population consists of those people considered to be most likely to be currently eligible for labour market assistance or likely to become eligible for assistance in the near future. It has been determined after consultation with government officials, labour market analysts and other users and is designed to enable the survey objectives to be met in the most efficient manner.

In broad terms, the sample will comprise persons resident in private dwellings who are aged 15 to 59. Within this broad population, there will be three subgroups:

"Jobseekers"

This subgroup comprises unemployed persons, part-time workers looking for a job with more hours, and others indicating a desire to join the labour force in the near future. A more detailed description is provided in Attachment A. It will facilitate the study of differences between the outcomes of Job Compact participants and those of 'similar' groups not participating in the Job Compact.

General population reference group

This subgroup comprises a random sample of the population aged 15 to 59. It has been included because of the need to have a reference group of the general population so that outcomes of various programs can be assessed in the context of general labour market conditions.

Known Job Compact participants

This subgroup is a sample of persons who have commenced a Job Compact job placement and/or commenced a training program between July 1994 and February 1995. This component of the sample has been included to ensure that the initial sample includes a sufficient number of Job Compact participants.

The expected initial size of each of these subgroups is shown in the following table.

Sub Group	Initial Panel size (approximate)
'Jobseekers'	8,000 persons
General population reference group	2,500 persons
Known Job Compact participants	1,000 persons

These sample numbers allow for attrition throughout the survey period. That is, it was decided that it was preferable to initially recruit a larger number, rather than to start smaller, and "top up" each year - this strategy maximises the number of respondents for whom data will be available for the full life of the survey.

Overview of collection strategy and data content

Recruitment of the initial sample for the survey and the collection of some baseline socio-demographic characteristics will take place between April and June 1995. Following this, the panel will be visited once each year for as long as the survey continues. At these visits, two distinct types of information will be collected by personal interview - information in respect of a **reference period**, and current, or **point in time** information.

Reference period information

Reference periods for the initial three data collection waves are as follows:

Wave 1 - 5 September 1994 to 3 September 1995;
Wave 2 - 4 September 1995 to 1 September 1996; and
Wave 3 - 2 September 1996 to 31 August 1997.

The information to be collected about these reference periods falls into two broad categories, **labour market activity information**, and ***training activity information***.

Labour market activity information

Information will be sought about:

- episodes of working
- episodes of looking for work
- episodes of neither working nor looking for work.

As an overview of labour market activity throughout the reference period, the following summary information will be available about **all** episodes:

- number of each type of episode
- start and finish date of each episode
- duration of each episode
- total duration of each type of episode.

While it would be desirable to collect much more detail about **all** episodes, the constraints of the interview situation, and the ability of panel members to recall with accuracy the detail of events up to 12 months ago, mean that this will not be possible for respondents who experience many changes throughout the period. It has, therefore, been decided that detailed labour market activity data will be collected about the following episodes:

- the episode at the beginning of the reference period
- the episode at the end of the reference period
- the following intervening episodes:
 - the most significant (longest) episodes of working
 - the most significant (longest) episode of looking for work
 - the most significant (longest) episode of neither working nor looking for work.

Field testing has indicated that since there are relatively few persons that have extensive multiple episodes, for most respondents an extensive range of data will be available for all episodes throughout the reference period. This data will focus on:

- Job characteristics (for episodes of working)
- Job search experience (for episodes of looking for work)
- Reasons for not looking for work (for episodes of neither working nor looking).

Training activity information

Data will be collected about training undertaken during the reference period, with a distinction being made between in-house courses undertaken while employed, and external courses provided by other than the employer. Data available for the most significant training undertaken will include:

- Field of study
- Duration of course
- Organisation conducting the course
- Assistance received for course
- Training outcome.

In order to assist respondents with recall over the reference period they will be provided with some recall aids, such as a diary and a calendar. In addition, information collected in the preceding interview will be used in the next interview to improve response and to reduce respondent load.

Point in time information

In addition to the episodal information outlined above, the survey will collect/update point in time information each year. This information will relate to the date of the interview, which will usually be September / October each year.

Type of details to be collected each year include:

- Socio-Demographic data
- Labour Force Status.
- SEUP Population Status (see Attachment A)
- Housing
- Geographic mobility
- Family Information
- Income

- Educational attainment and current study status.

Information collected direct from the respondent will, where possible, be supplemented with certain data from both DEET and DSS administrative systems.

A detailed list of all data items expected to be available is available on request.

Sample attrition

The ability to maintain contact with a high proportion of the initial sample will be critical to the usefulness of the survey data. A number of strategies will be put in place to help the ABS to stay in touch with people between interviews.

Results from the survey

It is intended that the first publication containing survey results will be released in March 1996, with subsequent publications each year in March.

More detailed tables and facilities to access unit records from the survey are expected to be available from June of each year.

No information will be released in a way that would enable an individual to be identified.

Analysis of survey data

The primary purpose of the survey is to support the longitudinal analysis of jobseekers' employment and unemployment dynamics (or labour market transitions) and, more generally, provide a quantitative insight into how the labour market functions over time. The ABS intends to develop a program to encourage analysis of the survey data in Government policy agencies and by labour market researchers. The intention will be to focus such analysis in areas of direct policy relevance.

Further information

It is expected that the next Information Paper will be released about September 1995, and that this will provide more details of the actual sample following recruitment.

For further information about the survey, and/or to be added to the mailing list for future information, please contact Colleen Ray on telephone (06) 252 7886 or fax (06) 252 6571.

Labour Branch
Australian Bureau of Statistics
April 1995

ATTACHMENT A

DETAILS OF JOBSEEKER SUB GROUP

The Jobseeker component of the SEUP sample will consist of persons aged 15 to 59 who meet the following criteria.

1. Unemployed Persons

Persons who were not employed in the reference week, and had actively looked for full-time or part-time work at any time in the last 4 weeks up to the end of the reference week, and

Were available for work in the reference week, or would have been available except for temporary illness (ie lasting for less than 4 weeks)

or

Were waiting to start a new job within 4 weeks from the end of the reference week and would have started in the reference week if the job had been available then.

But excluding :

(a) Persons currently unemployed who were stood down without pay for less than 4 weeks, ie they were waiting to be called back to a full-time or part-time job from which they had been stood down without pay for less than 4 weeks up to the end of the reference week (including the whole of the reference week) for reasons other than bad weather or plant breakdown.

(b) Full-time students, aged 15 to 24, who were currently looking for part-time work.

2. Persons Not in the Labour Force who were Discouraged Jobseekers

Persons Not in the Labour Force who :

Wanted to work and were available to start work within the next 4 weeks but whose main reason for not taking active steps to find work was that they believed they would not find a job for any of the following reasons:

- considered to be too young or too old by employers, or
- difficulties with language or ethnic background, or
- lacked the necessary schooling, training, skills or experience, or
- no job in their locality or line of work, or
- no job available at all.

But excluding:

(a) Full-time students, aged 15 to 24, who although were not currently looking for work, wanted to work and preferred a part-time job.

3. Persons Not in the Labour Force

Persons who wanted to work and were available to start work within 4 weeks, but whose main reason for not taking active steps to find work was that they were attending an Educational Institution or were on a job related training program.

But excluding:

(a) Full-time students, aged 15 to 24, who although were not currently looking for work, wanted to work and preferred a part-time job.

4. Persons Not in the Labour Force who wanted to work but were not available to start work

Persons who in the 4 weeks up to the end of the reference week had taken active steps to look for work, but did not meet the criteria to be classified as unemployed as they were not available to start work in the reference week.

But excluding:

(a) Full-time students, aged 15 to 24, who were currently looking for part-time work.

5. Part-time workers

Persons who usually work less than 10 hours per week, who had been actively looking for work for more hours and were available to start work within 4 weeks.

But excluding:

(a) Full-time students, aged 15 to 24, who were currently looking for part-time work with more hours

About this Release

ABOUT THIS RELEASE

This paper provides a description of the longitudinal Survey of Employment and Unemployment Patterns (SEUP) being conducted by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

except the ABS logo, the Commonwealth Coat of Arms, and any material protected by a trade mark – is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 2.5 Australia licence